



STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 83720
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0027

TOM LUNA
STATE SUPERINTENDENT
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Idaho State Department of Education

January 12, 2011

www.sde.idaho.gov

Media contact:

Melissa McGrath

(208) 332-6818

mrmcgrath@sde.idaho.gov

SUPERINTENDENT LUNA, GOVERNOR OTTER UNVEIL THREE PILLARS FOR CUSTOMER-DRIVEN EDUCATION

BOISE – Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna today unveiled *Students Come First*, a comprehensive plan to improve Idaho's public education system by ensuring we have a customer-driven system that educates more students at a higher level with limited resources.

“In Idaho, we must send a message that students come first,” Superintendent Luna said. “While we have made significant progress in raising student achievement in recent years, it's clear the current system is not sustainable. We are trying to prepare Idaho students for the 21st century using a 19th century model. It doesn't make sense. What I propose today is a comprehensive plan that will change the system to match our current economic demands, and more importantly, to meet our students' needs.”

Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter said: “This is an agenda focused on Idaho's future prosperity. It is designed to build a work force and a citizenry ready for tomorrow's challenges. Based on the fine collaborative work of the Education Alliance of Idaho, the State Board of Education, the Albertson Foundation, the State Department of Education and many others, we have crafted an agenda that puts students first and makes student achievement the foremost goal of our public schools. We want Idaho schools to be the best and most efficient in the country. Our plan will use the Idaho Education Network, cutting-edge technology in the classroom, increased support for instructional excellence, and enhanced transparency and accountability to accomplish our goal. Idaho's students deserve nothing less.”

In his presentation, Superintendent Luna pointed to the current challenges: “Consider this: over the past two years, Idaho has cut or shifted \$200 million from the K-12 public schools budget. Even based on optimistic revenue growth, it will take us the next 10 years to backfill the budget hole created in the past two years. That's 10 years. We cannot allow a whole generation of students to go through an underfunded system, just so we can keep the current system.”

For these reasons, Superintendent Luna and Governor Otter created the *Students Come First* plan to transform education in the State of Idaho. The plan focuses on three pillars: 21st Century Classroom, Great Teachers & Leaders, and Transparent Accountability.

Here are the elements of the Three Pillars:

The 21st Century Classroom: The 21st Century Classroom is not limited by walls, bell schedules, school calendars or geography. In a 21st Century Classroom, every student has access to a highly effective teacher, the necessary technology, and high academic standards comparable with any in the world.

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To create the 21st Century Classroom, the state will invest \$50 million over the next two years in both hardware and software for every Idaho classroom. Every 9th grader will be given a laptop, and high school students will be required to take online courses to graduate. Idaho will raise the bar by implementing college- and career-ready academic standards that are comparable with any country in the world. If a student meets graduation requirements early, the state will pay for dual credit courses in the student's senior year.

Great Teachers & Leaders: Students will have a highly effective teacher every year and a highly effective principal at the helm of every school.

The current way the State of Idaho pays teachers, based on experience and education only, is archaic. To recruit and retain a great teacher and leader in every classroom and school building, the state will fully restore the instructional salary grid, raise the minimum pay for new teachers to \$30,000, and implement a pay-for-performance plan that builds on base salaries to reward excellence. The state will continue to empower great teachers and leaders by ensuring all professional development is focused and meaningful. The state will phase out tenure in Idaho schools by offering every new teacher and administrator a two-year rolling contract. School districts will no longer be able to use seniority as the only criteria in determining teacher layoffs. Districts must tie at least a portion of teacher and administrator performance evaluations to student academic growth.

Transparent Accountability: Parents, taxpayers, and policymakers have current, accurate information on all student achievement results and financial matters in their schools and districts.

The state must ensure school district leaders are held accountable for student achievement results and taxpayer dollars at the local level. To do this, the state will empower parents by giving them input on teacher evaluations and access to understandable fiscal report cards for each district. Locally elected leaders now will have more flexibility to manage from year to year by streamlining collective bargaining practices. In addition, the state will work with every local district to ensure they take full advantage of statewide purchasing contracts, and will require that all taxpayer dollars follow the student.

The *Students Come First* plan will be funded through existing state dollars. Under this plan, the state will use efficiencies and cost savings found in the current system to invest millions of dollars to restructure our public schools.

By adapting the funding formula so money follows the student and increases the student-teacher ratio by less than two students per teacher, on average, the state can now invest in state-of-the-art technology for every classroom, meaningful teacher training, laptops for every 9th grader, fully restored teacher pay, pay-for-performance to reward excellence, and dual credit for high school seniors.

Superintendent Luna will present the full budget for the Students Come First plan to the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC) on Tuesday, January 18.

For more information, visit <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/studentsComeFirst/>.

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